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APPLICATION NUMBER 09/338744

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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of : DECISION
White :
Application No.: 09/338,744 :
Filing Date: 23 June, 1999 :
Attorney Docket No. 04873/056002 :
:

This is a decision on the petition re-filed on 6 April, 2007, after apparently having been filed originally unsigned on 31 January, 2007, and considered as a request to withdraw the holding of abandonment under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

The Office regrets the delay in addressing this matter, however, the instant petition was presented to the attorneys in the Office of Petitions only at this writing.¹

Petitioner does not appear to have been empowered herein, and so the Change of Address filed on 9 April and 26 July, 2007, have not been entered of record. A copy of this decision is being sent to the Petitioner, however, all correspondence will be directed to the address of record (above) until such proper authorization (i.e., Change of Address and a Certificate pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §3.73(b) is filed as required under the Rules of Practice no Change of Address will be entered.

Petitioner is given one (1) month—not less than 30 days—from the mail date of this decision to correct this oversight, and the period is not extendable.

¹ **NOTE:** Monitoring of the status of applications on PAIR can inform one's management of application responses and provide an indication when mailings of Office actions should be expected. Status Inquiries filed at three (3) or four (4) month intervals provide a demonstration of diligence and attention in supporting a petition seeking relief under 37 C.F.R. §1.181.

The petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is **GRANTED**.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the decision of the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences (copy enclosed) mailed on 30 July, 2004, with reply due absent extension of time on or before 30 September, 2004;
- the application went abandoned by operation of law after midnight 30 September, 2004;
- the Office mailed a Notice of Abandonment on 30 November, 2004;
- on 31 January, 2007, Petitioner originally filed the instant petition with, *inter alia*, an averment that he did not receive a copy of the final Office action because the Office apparently failed to enter the Revocation/Power of Attorney filed (with supporting documentation including a certificate under 37 C.F.R. §3.73(b)) on 10 May, 2004 (Petitioner avers a 6 May filing, however, that was the date of submission and not filing)—and so the Office action and the Notice of Abandonment were mailed to the old/wrong address—and made the statements and provided documents required (see the Manual of Patent Examining Procedure provisions discussed below) in support thereof—but the 31 January, 2007, petition was not signed;
- on 6 April, 2007, Petitioner re-asserted the averments of his earlier (31 January, 2007) petition—this time with signed papers.

The Revocation/Power of Attorney filed on 10 May, 2004, has been accepted and entered.

However, the Change of Address (filed on 9 April and 26 July, 2007) has not been entered because, as discussed above, they were not properly supported as required under the Rules of Practice, and Petitioner is reminded of the time period set forth above within which to correct the deficiencies discussed.

Notably, the availability of applications and application papers online to applicants/practitioners who diligently associate their Customer Number with the respective application(s) now provides an applicant/practitioner immediate and on-demand information as to events/transactions in an

application. Thus, now if one wishes to know the progress in and/or status of an application or the accuracy of the data therein, one need only look at the file online.

Out of an abundance of caution, Petitioners always are reminded that the filing of a petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 does not toll any periods that may be running as to any action by the Office and a petition seeking relief under the regulation must be filed within two (2) months of the act complained of (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.181(f)); and those registered to practice *and* all others who make representations before the Office must inquire into the underlying facts of representations made to the Office and support averments with the appropriate documentation—since all owe to the Office the continuing duty to disclose.²

² See supplement of 17 June, 1999. The Patent and Trademark Office is relying on petitioner's duty of candor and good faith and accepting a statement made by Petitioner. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing statements to the Patent and Trademark Office).

Specifically, the regulations at 37 C.F.R. §10.18 provide:

§ 10.18 Signature and certificate for correspondence filed in the Patent and Trademark Office.

(a) For all documents filed in the Office in patent, trademark, and other non-patent matters, except for correspondence that is required to be signed by the applicant or party, each piece of correspondence filed by a practitioner in the Patent and Trademark Office must bear a signature by such practitioner complying with the provisions of §1.4(d), §1.4(e), or § 2.193(c)(1) of this chapter.

(b) By presenting to the Office (whether by signing, filing, submitting, or later advocating) any paper, the party presenting such paper, whether a practitioner or non-practitioner, is certifying that—

(1) All statements made therein of the party's own knowledge are true, all statements made therein on information and belief are believed to be true, and all statements made therein are made with the knowledge that whoever, in any matter within the jurisdiction of the Patent and Trademark Office, knowingly and willfully falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact, or makes any false, fictitious or fraudulent statements or representations, or makes or uses any false writing or document knowing the same to contain any false, fictitious or fraudulent statement or entry, shall be subject to the penalties set forth under 18 U.S.C. 1001, and that violations of this paragraph may jeopardize the validity of the application or document, or the validity or enforceability of any patent, trademark registration, or certificate resulting therefrom; and

(2) To the best of the party's knowledge, information and belief, formed after an inquiry reasonable under the circumstances, that—

(i) The paper is not being presented for any improper purpose, such as to harass someone or to cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of prosecution before the Office;

(ii) The claims and other legal contentions therein are warranted by existing law or by a nonfrivolous argument for the extension, modification, or reversal of existing law or the establishment of new law;

(iii) The allegations and other factual contentions have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, are likely to have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for further investigation or discovery; and

(iv) The denials of factual contentions are warranted on the evidence, or if specifically so identified, are reasonably based on a lack of information or belief.

(c) Violations of paragraph (b)(1) of this section by a practitioner or non-practitioner may jeopardize the validity of the application or document, or the validity or enforceability of any patent, trademark registration, or certificate resulting therefrom. Violations of any of paragraphs (b)(2)(i) through (iv) of this section are, after notice and reasonable opportunity to respond, subject to such sanctions as deemed appropriate by the Commissioner, or the Commissioner's designee, which may include, but are not limited to, any combination of—

(1) Holding certain facts to have been established;

(2) Returning papers;

(3) Precluding a party from filing a paper, or presenting or contesting an issue;

(4) Imposing a monetary sanction;

(5) Requiring a terminal disclaimer for the period of the delay; or

(6) Terminating the proceedings in the Patent and Trademark Office.

(d) Any practitioner violating the provisions of this section may also be subject to disciplinary action. See § 10.23(c)(15).

[Added 50 FR 5175, Feb. 6, 1985, effective Mar. 8, 1985; para. (a) revised, 58 FR 54494, Oct. 22, 1993, effective Nov. 22, 1993; paras. (a) & (b) revised, paras. (c) & (d) added, 62 FR 53131, Oct. 10, 1997, effective Dec. 1, 1997; para. (a) revised, 69 FR 56481, Sept. 21, 2004, effective Oct. 21, 2004]

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).³

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority. The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.⁴

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.⁵ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁶

And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁷ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁸))

Allegations as to the Request to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment

³ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

⁴ Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

⁵ See: *Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice*, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁶ See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁷ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office *supra*.

⁸ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

The courts have determined the construct for properly supporting a petition seeking withdrawal of a holding of abandonment.⁹

The commentary at MPEP §711.03(c) provides:

* * *

A. Petition To Withdraw Holding of Abandonment Based on Failure To Receive Office Action

In *Delgar v. Schulyer*, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971), the court decided that the Office should mail a new Notice of Allowance in view of the evidence presented in support of the contention that the applicant's representative did not receive the original Notice of Allowance. Under the reasoning of *Delgar*, an allegation that an Office action was never received may be considered in a petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment. If adequately supported, the Office may grant the petition to withdraw the holding of abandonment and remail the Office action. That is, the reasoning of *Delgar* is applicable regardless of whether an application is held abandoned for failure to timely pay the issue fee (35 U.S.C. 151) or for failure to prosecute (35 U.S.C. 133). To minimize costs and burdens to practitioners and the Office, the Office has modified the showing required to establish nonreceipt of an Office action. The showing required to establish nonreceipt of an Office communication must include a statement from the practitioner stating that the Office communication was not received by the practitioner and attesting to the fact that a search of the file jacket and docket records indicates that the Office communication was not received. A copy of the docket record where the nonreceived Office communication would have been entered had it been received and docketed must be attached to and referenced in practitioner's statement. For example, if a three month period for reply was set in the nonreceived Office action, a copy of the docket report showing all replies docketed for a date three months from the mail date of the nonreceived Office action must be submitted as documentary proof of nonreceipt of the Office action.

* * *

The showing outlined above may not be sufficient if there are circumstances that point to a conclusion that the Office action may have been lost after receipt rather than a conclusion that the Office action was lost in the mail (e.g., if the practitioner has a history of not receiving Office actions).

Evidence of nonreceipt of an Office communication or action (e.g., Notice of

⁹ See: Delgar v. Schulyer, 172 USPQ 513 (D.D.C. 1971).

Abandonment or an advisory action) other than that action to which reply was required to avoid abandonment would not warrant withdrawal of the holding of abandonment. Abandonment takes place by operation of law for failure to reply to an Office action or timely pay the issue fee, not by operation of the mailing of a Notice of Abandonment. See *Lorenz v. Finkl*, 333 F.2d 885, 889-90, 142 USPQ 26, 29-30 (CCPA 1964); *Krahn v. Commissioner*, 15 USPQ2d 1823, 1824 (E.D. Va 1990); *In re Application of Fischer*, 6 USPQ2d 1573, 1574 (Comm'r Pat. 1988). (Emphasis supplied.)

* * *

Moreover, the regulation places upon Petitioner a diligence requirement to seek relief within two (2) months of the act complained of.

It appears that Petitioner has satisfied the showing as discussed above.

CONCLUSION

The petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.181 is granted, and the 30 November, 2004, Notice of Abandonment is vacated.

The instant application is released to BPAI for further processing, including the re-mailing of the 30 November, 2004, Decision of the Board with a new period of reply, in due course.

While telephone inquiries regarding this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3214, it is noted that all practice before the Office is in writing (see: 37 C.F.R. §1.2¹⁰) and the proper authority for action on any matter in this regard are the statutes (35 U.S.C.), regulations (37 C.F.R.) and the commentary on policy (MPEP). Therefore, no telephone discussion may be controlling or considered authority for Petitioner's action(s).


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cc:

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¹⁰ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.2 provide:

§1.2 Business to be transacted in writing.

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.